

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMCONSUL HAMBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2951

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION BERLIN

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AMCONSUL DUESSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

C O N F I D E N T I A L HAMBURG 616

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: JUNE 9, 1974 LAND ELECTIONS IN LOWER SAXONY

REF: HAMBURG A-16 OF APRIL 19, 1974

1. THE ELECTORAL PENDULUM IN LOWER SAXONY WHICH, UNTIL THE RESIGNATION OF FORMER CHANCELLOR BRANDT, SEEMED TO BE SWINGING INEXORABLY TOWARD A CDU VICTORY AT THE POLLS ON JUNE 9 NOW, WITH LESS THAN TWO WEEKS TO GO BEFORE THE ELECTION, APPEARS TO BE MOVING SLOWLY BACK TOWARD THE SPD. IN THE WAKE OF RECENT ELECTORAL VICTORIES FOR THE CDU IN HAMBURG AND SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN, WE REPORTED (REF AIRGRAM) THAT THE CDU WAS LOADED FOR BEAR IN THE LOWER SAXONY ELECTIONS AND, BUOYED BY RECENT VICTORIES AT THE POLLS, EXPECTED TO WIN A PLURALITY AND PERHAPS EVEN A MAJORITY OF SEATS IN THE NEW LANDTAG IN HANNOVER. SIX TO TEN WEEKS AGO, REALISTIC SPD POLITICIANS IN LOWER SAXONY GLOOMILY FEARED FOR THE WORST AND WERE PRIVATELY EXPRESSING THEIR APPREHENSIONS TO US THAT A CDU ELECTORAL VICTORY ON JUNE 9 WAS

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QUITE POSSIBLE. THE MOOD OF THE KUBEL ADMINISTRATION THEN WAS

PESSIMISTIC AND SOMBER AND SPD LEADERS RELUCTANTLY ADMITTED THAT PARTY SUPPORTERS TENDED TO EQUATE THE SPD IN LOWER SAXONY WITH THE UNPOPULAR COALITION GOVERNMENT IN BONN.

2. SLOWLY, HOWEVER, THE MOOD SEEMED TO CHANGE AND WE HAVE BEGUN TO SENSE IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH CAMPAIGN WORKERS IN ALL PARTIES THAT THE CDU HAS BEGUN TO RUN OUT OF STEAM AND THAT THE BETTER ORGANIZED AND INCUMBENT SPD LAND GOVERNMENT WILL BE REELECTED, ALBEIT WITH FDP SUPPORT. THE FDP CLEARLY HOLDS THE KEY TO SPD SUCCESS BECAUSE MOST AGREE THAT THE FDP WILL CROSS THE 5 PERCENT THRESHOLD IN THIS ELECTION, THEREBY GIVING THE PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE NEW LANDTAG. MOMENTUM FOR A CDU MAJORITY VICTORY BEGAN TO WANE WITH THE RESIGNATION OF BRANDT AND WITH THE FORMATION OF A NEW AND MORE VIGOROUS SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT, IT IS THE CDU WHICH IS NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME, BEGINNING TO EXPERIENCE SOME DOUBT ABOUT ITS CHANCES.

3. AS THE CAMPAIGN APPROACHES ITS FINAL TWO WEEKS, BITTER AND PERSONAL ANTAGONISMS ARE BEGINNING TO MARK MUCH OF THE ORATORY. THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES - THE INCUMBENT SPD MINISTER PRESIDENT, ALFRED KUBEL, AND HIS CDU OPPONENT, WILFRIED HASSELMANN - HAVE BEEN ELBOWED INTO THE WINGS BY THEIR PARTY'S PROMINENT NATIONAL LEADERS WHO HAVE BEEN STUMPING LOWER SAXONY IN RECENT DAYS. ON MAY 27 AT A RALLY IN HANNOVER AIMED AT DEMONSTRATING PARTY UNITY AND BOLSTERING PARTY MORALE, CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT WITH BRANDT, DEPUTY PARTY CHAIRMAN HEINZ KUEHN AND SPD BUNDESTAG FLOOR LEADER HERBERT WEHNER AT HIS SIDE, EMPHASIZED THE CONTINUITY OF SPD PARTY POLICY AND THE CONTINUATION OF BRANDT'S INFLUENCE IN PARTY COUNCILS. BRANDT REMAINED RATHER DEFERENTIALLY IN THE BACKGROUND AND IT REMAINED FOR WEHNER TO MOUNT A RATHER SAVAGE ATTACK ON THE CDU. REFERRING TO RECENT ALLEGATIONS THAT GUENTHER NOLLAU, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL AGENCY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE CONSTITUTION (BUNDESAMT FUER VERFASSUNGSSCHUTZ), WAS A SUSPECTED HIGH LEVEL EAST GERMAN AGENT, WEHNER IMPLIED, WITH PERHAPS AN EXCUSABLE BIT OF CAMPAIGN HYPERBOLE, THAT THE CDU, MORE THAN ATTEMPTING TO EMBARRASS THE BONN COALITION, THREATENED A "COLD COUP D'ETAT AGAINST THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC".

4. CDU/CSU NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS HAVE BEEN EQUALLY ACTIVE IN THE CAMPAIGN. PARTY CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL, DEPUTY PARTY

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CHAIRMAN GERHARD STOLTENBERG, CSU CHAIRMAN FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS AND CDU SECRETARY GENERAL KURT BIEDENKOPF HAVE ALL BEEN IN LOWER SAXONY DURING THE PAST WEEK AND HASSELMANN'S NAME HAS BEEN ECLIPSED BY THEIR PRESENCE AND RHETORIC. CLEARLY, WHILE THE STAGE IS SET IN LOWER SAXONY, THE PRINCIPAL POLITICAL BATTLES ARE BEING WAGED BY THE NATIONAL MERCENARIES FROM BONN. AS THE DEBATES AND RECRIMINATIONS BETWEEN THE CDU AND THE SPD INTENSIFY, THE FDP NATIONAL POLITICIANS WHO HAVE JOINED THE CAMPAIGN ARE

BEGINNING TO RECEIVE LESS PROMINENCE IN THE HEADLINES ALTHOUGH THE FDP STILL APPEARS TO CONTROL THE OUTCOME AS FAR AS AN SPD ELECTORAL VICTORY IS CONCERNED. ACTING FDP CHAIRMAN HANS DIETER GENSCHER, BUNDESTAG FLOOR LEADER WOLFGANG MISCHNICK AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE WERNER MAIHOFFER HAVE BEEN CAMPAIGNING IN LOWER SAXONY ALTHOUGH, LIKE KUBEL AND HASSELMANN, THEY TOO HAVE BEEN ALMOST ECLIPSED BY THE PRINCIPAL ANTAGONISTS, SCHMIDT AND WEHNER FOR THE SPD AND STRAUSS, HOHL AND STOLTENBERG FOR THE CDU.

5. THE GAP NOW SEEMS TO HAVE NARROWED BETWEEN AN SPD/FDP COMBINATION AND THE CDU TO A POINT WHERE ONE OR TWO SEATS EITHER WAY WILL DETERMINE THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION. AS THEY COME DOWN THE HOMESTRETCH, THE SPD/FDP AND THE CDU SEEM TO BE NECK AND NECK AND, AS THEY DRAW TO THE FINISH, WE BELIEVE THAT THE ADDED NEW ELEMENT OF SCHMIDT'S LEADERSHIP IN BONN WILL BE THAT EXTRA NEEDED BOOST WHICH WILL TILT THE VICTORY TOWARD THE SPD ON JUNE 9. BROGAN

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